

# Kalinga Meat-sharing System

**KALINGA, KALINGA PROVINCE, NORTHERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES.** *Among the ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, food, especially meat, is shared among kin and community. The extent of the sharing is determined by the social distance.*

*Food is one commodity that people share among themselves, freely given or offered without being asked. Traditionally, among the Kalinga of northern Luzon, anyone, stranger or not, upon arrival in a household, without even asking, may eat any food he sees or take a drink. This act immediately places the household under an obligation to protect him. When offered food, it must be accepted, otherwise the act will be considered a declaration of conflict because to their way of thinking “only an enemy will not eat with me”.*



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ANIMALS SACRIFICED during rituals or obtained through hunting are always shared in a very specific and formal manner among the Kalinga. Equity is strictly observed; each person is considered integral with no consideration as to age, sex, or social status. Present or not during the occasion of the meat-sharing, the meat is distributed in a circle of social distance that is proportional to the amount of meat available. The core is the immediate household, spreading out to the neighbors, eventually the whole community. If the meat quantity allows, even close relatives in other communities are sent their shares even if by the time the meat gets there it is already ripe. The meat distributed is separate from the portions cooked for the occasion which everyone present may feast on, including visitors who, however, are not given shares unless they are very prominent personalities.

The Kalinga manner of carabao butchering during rituals is as follows:

The carabao is restrained by a rope through its nostrils, head and horns and then secured to something stable. With a single slicing stroke of a *bolo* (large working knife), the throat is slashed. The carcass is left to bleed for some time then rolled onto a bedding of leaves, usually banana or palm fronds, to be cut up.

The legs are cut off first. If one or more legs are to be sent to a family or affinal families of the children of the household, two chicken feathers are stuck into the leg at the place where these were severed from the torso. The legs not so allotted and the rest of the carcass are cut up into portions equal in nutritive values and strung on bamboo strips (*ilang*), one end of which is a loop to keep the strung meat from falling off. These are hung on poles. As the legs are being cut off, another man cuts at the sternum to open the thorax and belly. These days, the skin is cut off in irregular pieces and thrown to the dogs, but formerly, it was kept and eaten by the people

(opposite page) Meat among the Kalinga, as among other indigenous peoples, is always shared in rigidly meticulous ways dictated by specific rules of distribution.

when they become meat-hungry during seasons of scarcity. The butcher of the carcass cuts off small hunks of, perhaps, two kilos of the better meat (to which are added small pieces of the liver) for the near relatives which are also hung on the poles. Larger weights of joints, pieces of the enormous stomach, intestines, lungs, spleen, and so on, (the less desirable portions) are also spitted but are left lying on the palm leaves. These shares are for visitors; second and possibly third cousins. Occasionally, one of the butchers (usually the givers of the feast) will cut off an especially large hunk of the first class meat and hand it to a bystander with directions for its delivery to a *pangat* or an especially influential man. If the family of the fiancé of one of his children is not entitled to a whole leg, then a large hunk of the very choicest meat will be sent to him. Aside from these exceptions, the meat is entirely cut up before it is distributed. The host takes the head and if the feast was held because of an illness, the patient receives the brains.

The host distributes the meat, first disposing of those on the mat of leaves, calling the guests to receive them. The shares of relatives who are absent are sent to them. The meat is usually received indifferently, without expressions of gratitude as these are reciprocal acts, replicated by all community members in their own rituals.

There is no particular prestige feast among the Kalinga unlike other Cordillera groups, but in effect, every feast is a prestige feast.

The division of meat between hunters is as follows:

1. Each hunter with a dog is given two shares (*ilang*).
2. Hunters without dogs are given one share.
3. The dogs shall receive the lungs, hide and bones. If the shares of the hunters are small and if many gifts have been made to “comers out” then they pool shares and cook/eat together.